



Department of Energy
Germantown, MD 20874-1290

FEB 08 1999

The Honorable Phillip Muller
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Republic of the Marshall Islands
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Minister Muller:

Thank you for your letter of January 22, 1999, regarding the Department of Energy's (DOE) December 22, 1998, drafts of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and companion DOE environmental support plan for the resettlement of Rongelap Island. I am writing to respond to the five issues raised in your letter. Our responses were previously discussed during a February 4, 1999, conference call with Mr. Howard Hills. Unfortunately, Ms. Holly Barker was unable to join this conference call as was originally planned.

Whole Body Counting for 100 Percent of the Workers

We are prepared to provide the Rongelap Atoll Local Government (RALGOV) with the capability to perform whole body counting for 100 percent of resettlement workers. To be able to meet this goal, we will need RALGOV to establish a facility on Rongelap Island suitable to house a DOE-provided whole body counter (WBC) and pay for the utilities necessary to maintain and operate the counter. Once such a facility is established and operable, DOE will maintain the WBC in good operating condition, train qualified Rongelapese to operate the WBC, and hire two technically qualified Rongelapese (for up to 20 hours per week each) to perform whole body counting.

We estimate that whole body counting at Rongelap can begin within 6 months of signing the MOU, provided the RALGOV-supplied facility is available and appropriately equipped.

Bioassay Counting for 100 Percent of the Workers

Based on the scientific data, we believe the health threat from the potential dose contribution from plutonium is so small that plutonium bioassay for workers is not needed. However, to help reassure the Rongelap people their exposure to plutonium is minimal, DOE is prepared to conduct plutonium bioassay of 50 percent of the workers (baseline and exit urine samples). We understand from Mr. Hills that RALGOV may be willing to defray the cost (about \$1500 per sample) for plutonium testing of the remainder of the workers.

Once the MOU is signed, the bioassay results of DOE's initial urine sampling of workers will be completed within 4 months. We estimate that subsequent samples can be analyzed within 3-4 months.



Baseline Data for 100 Percent of the Workers

We need clarification of this request before we can provide a response.

An Easily Accessible Means to Consider the Cumulative Exposure Doses People Receive

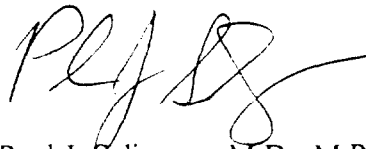
Each RALGOV worker will receive the results of his own WBC directly and in writing at the time of the test. For plutonium bioassay results, each individual will receive a written report when the analysis of the sample is completed. Under the DOE support plan, DOE is prepared to provide the results of all individual WBC and plutonium bioassay testing, without names, electronically.

A Plan for the Deposit of Contaminated Soil Removed from the Village Area

Since DOE is not involved in this activity, it is not included in the MOU or the DOE support plan. We understand that RALGOV has developed, and is implementing, a plan for deposit of contaminated soil removed from the village area. We appreciate the importance of this subject and your Government's concern that the removed soil be disposed of safely.

We hope this information helps to address the issues raised in your letter. We suggest that a meeting be held at the RMI Embassy the week of February 8-12, 1999, to finalize the text of the MOU and clear up any remaining issues, such as your request for baseline data for 100 percent of the workers. Please advise us of a convenient date for such a meeting.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Seligman, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Health Studies

cc: Ambassador Banny de Brum
RMI Embassy, Washington, D.C.
Ambassador Joan Plaisted
U.S. Embassy, Majuro
Senator Johnsay Riklon, Rongelap
Mayor James Matayoshi, Rongelap
Howard Hills, Esq.
Joseph McDermott, DOI